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Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 INSE-00 VO-05
TRSE-00 OMB-01 SP-02 AID-05 ABF-01 /055 W
----------006410 291816Z /44
P 291756Z AUG 78
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3613
AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, UNHCR
SUBJECT: MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU

REF: A. STATE 217827; B. HONG KONG 11813 (BOTH NOTAL)

1. PRIOR TO RECEIPT OF REF A, MISSION HAD MADE APPOINTMENT FOR AFTERNOON AUGUST 28, TO SHARE WITH UNHCR DIRECTOR OF OFFICE, JAEGER, INFORMATION CONTAINED RECENT REFTELS FROM HONG KONG (E.G., 11740, 11667, 11657, 11656, ETC.), TO UNDERSCORE OUR DEEP CONCERN OVER PROBLEM AND FAILURE THUS FAR OF UNHCR TO MOVE ACTIVELY TO EXPLOIT MACAU OPTION. INFORMAL NOTE HAD BEEN PREPARED WHICH HIGHLIGHTED FOLLOW-ING:

A. RAPIDLY GROWING NUMBER OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG/KOWLOON AREA;
B. GROWING INSUFFICIENCY OF ACCOMMODATIONS IN THAT AREA FOR REFUGEES;
C. HIGH COST OF MAINTAINING REFUGEES THERE;
D. FAILURE OF UNHCR REPRESENTATIVES TO FOLLOW-UP ON OFFER OF MACAU AUTHORITIES TO RECEIVE REFUGEES, WHICH WOULD:(1) RELIEVE CROWDED CONDITIONS IN HONG

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KONG; AND (2) PERMIT REFUGEE MAINTENANCE AT APPRE-CIABLY LOWER COST THAN IN HONG KONG.

NOTE POINTED OUT THAT THROUGH FIRST 25 DAYS OF AUGUST, 1,062 MORE REFUGEES ARRIVED IN HONG KONG, BRINGING TOTAL REFUGEE POPULATION THERE TO 2,902. IT OBSERVED THAT BY CONTRAST, AS OF AUGUST 24, ONLY 285 REFUGEES WERE IN

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MACAU, ALL OF THEM DIRECT ARRIVALS AND THAT NO REPEAT ND REFUGEES HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED TO DATE FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU. AT CURRENT RATES, THE SUBSISTENCE OF 2,722 REFUGEES IN HONG KONG IS SAID TO COST SOME $600,000 MONTHLY. OUR REPRESENTATION IN HONG KONG CONSIDERS THAT UNHCR REP THERE NOW HAS HIS HANDS FULL IN HANDLING NEW ARRIVALS AND ONE MORE REPRESENTATIVE IS NEEDED TO PLAN AND CONDUCT TRANSFER OF REFUGEES TO MACAU. NOTE REPORTED LOWMAN OBSERVATION THAT CONSTRAINT IN USE OF MACAU IS NOT IN ACTUAL PHYSICAL CAPACITY BUT RATHER IN WILLINGNESS OF MACAU GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT LARGER NUMBERS OF REFUGEES FOR TEMPORARY ASYLUM, WHICH WOULD BE ENHANCED IF INITIAL TRANSFERS THERE GO SMOOTHLY. THIS IS ESSENTIAL AT PRESENT TIME IN VIEW OF SENSE OF ALARM WE ARE RECEIVING FROM HONG KONG OFFICIALDOM OVER LARGE AND RAPIDLY ACCELERATING REFUGEE COMMUNITY THERE, NOTE STATED. IT CONCLUDED THAT FROM BOTH HONG KONG AND WASHINGTON WE ARE RECEIVING INDICATIONS OF DEEPENING CONCERN OVER SITUATION AND A FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND WHY UNHCR HAS FAILED TO MOVE MORE VIGOROUSLY IN THIS CRISIS. WE URGED THAT UNHCR TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE MACAU FACILITY BEFORE HONG KONG SITUATION IS TRULY OUT OF HAND AND/OR THE AVAILABILITY OF HONG KONG FOR FIRST ASYLUM IS DENIED. NOTE REPEATED RECOMMENDATION THAT UNHCR DESPATCH ANOTHER REPRESENTATIVE TO HONG KONG TO ASSIST IN THIS EFFORT.

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2. IN VIEW REQUEST CONTAINED REF A, WHICH WAS RECEIVED IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO APPOINTMENT, MISSOFF INFORMED JAEGER THAT APPROACH WAS NOW BEING MADE UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM DEPARTMENT. JAEGER, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY AREA DIRECTOR HAN AND DESK OFFICER BARI, TOOK NOTE OF POINTS MADE AND PROMISED TO FOLLOW UP ACTIVELY. HAN OBSERVED THAT MOVEMENTS TO MACAU HAD BEEN DEFERRED DUE TO RESERVATIONS BY MACAU LT. GOVERNOR. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT CONTRADICT MISSOFF'S OBSERVATION THAT THIS CONSTITUTED A BARRIER FOR ONLY A FEW DAYS, AND THAT THE MATTER OF THE USE OF MACAU WAS OF FAR LONGER STANDING.

3. HAN ALSO OBSERVED THAT CARPENTER WAS SCHEDULED TO BE REPLACED IN HONG KONG FOR RETURN TO KUALA LUMPUR BY MR. GENTILONI (PH.) IN EARLY OCTOBER, BUT AGAIN AGREED THAT THIS, AS A ONE FOR ONE REPLACEMENT, WOULD NOT RESOLVE THE PROBLEM OF INADEQUATE DIRECTION ON THE SCENE. JAEGER FELT THAT THE TIME MAY HAVE COME WHEN HONG KONG SHOULD BE BROKEN OFF FROM SAMPATKUMAR'S JURISDICTION AND SET UP AS A SEPARATE ENTITY TO MEET THIS PROBLEM, ALTHOUGH IN PRINCIPLE, UNHCR WAS DISPOSED TO CONDUCT ITS REGIONAL OPERATIONS AS A UNIT.

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4. JAEGER ASSURED MISSOFF THAT MATTER WOULD RECEIVE URGENT AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. HE ASKED HAN TO REMAIN BEHIND FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AFTER MEETING.
5. AS CONCERNS REF B, JAEGER TOLD MISSOFF IN COURSE OF MEETING THAT BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAS REQUESTED SESSION WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER, WHO RETURNED TO GENEVA AUGUST 29, TO DISCUSS "HONG KONG PROBLEM".

6. COMMENT: TONE OF MEETING CONVEYED FEELING THAT UNHCR HEADQUARTERS ITSELF HAS NOT BEEN ENTHUSIASTIC OVER ACCEP-

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 INSE-00 VO-05
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TANCE OF MACAU OPTION. WE THEREFORE CONSIDER IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT CARPENTER'S FOOT-DRAGGING HAS BEEN ATTRIBU-TABLE TO DIRECTIONS FROM ABOVE, AND NOT A MATTER OF HIS OWN INITIATIVE. THIS POSSIBILITY WAS ALLUDED TOBY MISSOFF IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION. JAEGER, WHO WAS EVIDENTLY NOT COMPLETELY UP TO DATE ON THE MATTER SEEMED DEEPLY IMPRESSED WITH GRAVITY OF SITUATION AND ANXIOUS TO MOVE RAPIDLY TO CORRECT IT. WE SHALL BE FOLLOWING MATTER CLOSELY HERE. END COMMENT.
VANDEN HEUVEL

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